Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) A system for communicating between a first region having a first site and a second site, and a second region having a third site and a fourth site, the system comprising:

a first cable having two ends, the first end terminating at the first site and the second end terminating at the third site;

a second cable having two ends, the first end terminating at the second site and the second end terminating at the fourth site; and

a third cable having four ends, the first end terminating at the first site, the second end terminating at the third site, the third end terminating at the second site, and the fourth end terminating at the fourth site;

wherein the first cable and the second cable each have a capacity of bandwidth X and the third cable has a capacity of at least bandwidth 2X.

2. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein data is communicated in the third cable between the first site and the third site, and between the second site and the fourth site.

3. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the third cable is comprised of two cables of equal capacity.

4. (currently amended) The system of claim 1, further comprising at least one switching element located at each of the sites ~~site~~ for switching data traffic between the sites.

5. (original) The system of claim 4, wherein the data traffic is classified into grades having different levels of priority.

6. (currently amended) The system of claim 5, wherein upon [[the]] a failure of at least one of the cables, ~~cable the~~ a highest priority of the grades of the data traffic is switched by a switching element that is located at a site at which the data traffic originates, from the failed at

least one of the cables ~~cable~~ to one of [[the]] other ones of remaining cables, and is transmitted first, followed by successive lower priority ones of the grades of the data traffic and continuing until a total bandwidth of the remaining cables of the system is utilized.

7. (currently amended) A method of installing a system for communicating between a first region having a first site and a second site connected to each other, and a second region having a third site and a fourth site connected to each other, the method ~~consisting of the steps of~~ comprising:

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installing a first cable having a capacity of bandwidth X between the first site and the third site;

installing a second cable having a capacity of bandwidth X between the second site and the fourth site; and

installing a third cable having a capacity of at least bandwidth 2X between the first site and the third site and the second site and the fourth site, wherein each of the sites ~~site~~ is connected to a bandwidth capacity of at least X.

8. (original) The method of claim 7, wherein the first cable has two ends, the second cable has two ends, and the third cable has four ends.

9. (currently amended) A system for communicating data classified into a plurality of grades between a first region having a first and a second site, and a second region having a third and a fourth site, the system comprising:

a switching element located at each site, each of the switching elements ~~element~~ having at least three data ports for transmitting data to the other switching elements, each of a first and a second data port being multiplexed to carry at least two of the plurality of grades of data, and a third data port being multiplexed to carry the plurality of grades of data;

a first interconnecting cable being connected to the third data port of a first one of the switching elements ~~element~~ located at the first site and the third data port of a second one of the switching elements ~~element~~ located at the second site, and a second interconnecting cable being connected to the third data port of a third one of the switching elements ~~element~~ located at the third site and the third data port of a fourth one of the switching elements ~~element~~ located at the fourth site; and

a first cable and a second cable, each being of bandwidth X, the first cable being connected to one of the first [[and]] or the second data ports of the first one of the switching elements ~~element~~ and one of the first [[and]] or the second data ports of the third one of the switching elements ~~element~~, the second cable being connected to one of the first [[and]] or the second data ports of the second one of the switching elements ~~element~~ and one of the first [[and]] or the second data ports of the fourth one of the switching elements ~~element~~, and a third cable of at least bandwidth 2X [[and]] being connected to one of the first [[and]] or the second data ports of each switching element, each cable being distantly routed from each other cable.

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10. (currently amended) The system of claim 9, wherein the classification of the grades of data is determined by a priority of the grades of data, a lower priority being preempted by a higher priority, [[the]] a highest priority assigned to ~~a grade~~ one of the grades of data never preempted and a lowest priority assigned to ~~a grade~~ another of the grades of data preempted first.

11. (currently amended) ~~In a~~ A system for communicating data classified into a plurality of grades between a first region having a first and a second site, and a second region having a third and a fourth site, the system ~~having~~ comprising:

a first interconnecting cable ~~being connected to~~ connecting the first site and [[to]] the second site[[,]];

a second interconnecting cable ~~being connected to~~ connecting the third site and [[to]] the fourth site[[,]];

a first cable of bandwidth X ~~being connected to~~ connecting the first site and the third site[[,]];

a second cable of bandwidth X ~~being connected to~~ connecting the second site and the fourth site[[, and]];

a third cable of at least bandwidth 2X ~~being connected to~~ connecting each of the sites[[, the improvement which comprises:]]; and

a switching element located at each ~~site~~ of the sites, each of the switching ~~element~~ elements having an input port for each of the plurality of grades of data, and at least three data ports for connecting to switching elements of other ones of the sites, a first and a second of the at least three data ports each being multiplexed to carry at least two of the plurality of grades of

traffic, and a third of the at least three data ports being multiplexed to carry the plurality of grades of traffic.

12. (currently amended) A method of switching a plurality of grades of data in a communications network ~~in the event of~~ when at least one data cable failure occurs in the network, the communications network having a first region ~~having~~ including a first site connected to a second site, and a second region ~~having~~ including a third site connected to a fourth site, each ~~site~~ of the sites having at least one switching element, each of the switching ~~element~~ elements having a plurality of input ports each being connected to carry one of the plurality of grades of data, and having at least three data ports for switching the data to another of the switching elements, a first and a second data port of the at least three data ports being multiplexed to carry at least two of the plurality of grades of data and a third data port being multiplexed to carry the plurality of grades of data, a first cable of bandwidth X being connected to one of the first ~~and~~ or the second data ports of a first one of the ~~first~~ switching ~~element~~ elements and one of the first ~~and~~ or the second data ports of a third one of the ~~third~~ switching ~~element~~ elements, a second cable of bandwidth X being connected to one of the first ~~and~~ or the second data ports of [[the]] a second one of the switching ~~element~~ elements and one of the first ~~and~~ or the second data ports of ~~the~~ a fourth one of the switching ~~element~~ elements, and a third cable of at least bandwidth 2X being connected to one of the first ~~and~~ or the second data ports of the first one of the switching elements and the second one of the switching elements and one of the first ~~and~~ or the second data ports of the third one of the switching elements and the fourth one of the switching elements, each of the grades ~~grade~~ of data being assigned a priority, the method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

determining that a cable failure has occurred in at least one of the cables; and

switching a higher priority of the grades ~~grade~~ of data from the failed cable to a cable not experiencing a failure by preempting a lower priority of the grades ~~grade~~ of ~~traffic~~ data.

13. (currently amended) A method of switching a plurality of grades of data in a communications network ~~in the event of~~ when at least one data cable failure occurs in the network, the communications network having a first region ~~having~~ including a first site connected to a second site, and a second region ~~having~~ including a third site connected to a fourth site, each of the sites ~~site~~ having at least one switching element having at least three data

ports for switching the data to another of the switching elements, a first cable of bandwidth X being connected to one of a first ~~and~~ or a second data port of a first one of the switching elements ~~element~~ and one of a first ~~and~~ or a second data port of a third one of the switching elements ~~element~~, a second cable of bandwidth X being connected to one of a first ~~and~~ or a second data port of a second one of the switching elements ~~element~~ and one of a first ~~and~~ or a second data port of a fourth one of the switching elements ~~element~~, and a third cable of at least bandwidth 2X being connected to one of the first ~~and~~ or the second data ports of the first one of the switching elements and the second one of the switching elements and one of the first ~~and~~ or the second data ports of the third one of the switching elements and the fourth one of the switching elements, the method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

multiplexing, by the switching elements, the plurality of grades of data onto the data ports, with at least two of the plurality of grades of data being multiplexed to each of the first and the second data ports ~~port~~, and each of the grades ~~grade~~ of data being multiplexed onto each of the third data ports ~~port~~;

assigning a priority to each of the grades ~~grade~~ of data;

determining that a cable failure has occurred in at least one of the cables; and

switching a higher priority of the grades ~~grade~~ of data from the failed cable to a cable not experiencing a failure by preempting a lower priority of the grades ~~grade~~ of traffic, wherein a highest priority of the grades of data is transmitted first, followed by successive lower ~~priority~~ priorities of the grades of data and continuing until a total bandwidth of ~~the~~ remaining ones of the cables of the system is utilized.

14. (new) The system of claim 1, wherein the first cable, the second cable and the third cable are deep-sea cables.

15. (new) The method of claim 7, wherein the first cable, the second cable and the third cable are deep-sea cables.

16. (new) The system of claim 9, wherein the first cable, the second cable and the third cable are deep-sea cables.

17. (new) The system of claim 11, wherein the first cable, the second cable and the third cable are deep-sea cables.

18. (new) The method of claim 12, wherein the first cable, the second cable and the third cable are deep-sea cables.

19. (new) The method of claim 13, wherein the first cable, the second cable and the third cable are deep-sea cables.